



**STATEMENT OF PROCEEDINGS FOR THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 739
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
<http://lachildrenscommission.org>**

Monday, March 18, 2013

10:00 AM

AUDIO LINK FOR THE ENTIRE MEETING. (13-1476)

Attachments: [AUDIO](#)

Present: Chair Geneva Berger, Vice Chair Helen Kleinberg, Vice Chair Susan F. Friedman, Commissioner Carol O. Biondi, Commissioner Patricia Curry, Commissioner Ann E. Franzen, Commissioner Dr. Sunny Kang, Commissioner Dr. La-Doris McClaney, Commissioner Daphne Ng, Commissioner Steven M. Olivas Esq., Commissioner Sandra Rudnick, Commissioner Adelina Sorkin LCSW/ACSW and Commissioner Martha Trevino-Powell

Call to Order. (13-1239)

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. Introduction of March 18, 2013 Meeting attendees. (13-1142)

Self-introductions were made.

2. Approval of the March 18, 2013 Meeting Agenda. (13-1240)

On motion of Commissioner Adelina Sorkin LCSW/ACSW, seconded by Vice Chair Helen Kleinberg, unanimously carried, this item was approved. Commissioner Olivas was not present during vote taken for this item.

3. Approval of the minutes from the Meeting of March 4, 2013. (13-1241)

On motion of Vice Chair Helen Kleinberg, seconded by Commissioner Dr. Sunny Kang, unanimously carried, this item was approved. Commissioner Olivas was not present during vote taken for this item.

Attachments: [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

II. REPORTS

4. Chair's report for March 18, 2013 by Genevra Berger, Chair. (13-1242)

Chair Berger reported the following:

- Our Commission's condolences go out to Director Browning and DCFS Staff for the passing of Michael Gray, Regional Administrator of the DCFS Wateridge Office, who unexpectedly passed away last week on March 13, 2013.
- The motion by Supervisor Mark-Ridley Thomas regarding the 241.1 Crossover Youth Project is being considered at the March 19, 2013 Board of Supervisor's agenda ([Item 2](#)).
- The Auditor-Controller's Office finished their review of the Commission's Sunset Review Application, and they are recommending that the Audit Committee recommend to the Board of Supervisors the extension of the Commission's sunset review date to September 30, 2017. The Audit Committee has scheduled this recommendation on its March 28, 2013 agenda.
- A New Commissioner's Orientation is scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2013, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 739, Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles.
- The Statement of Economic Interests, Form 700, is due on April 2, 2013. Commissioners may contact staff if they have any questions.
- Kim Belshé, Executive Director of First 5 LA Commission, will be presenting at the April 22, 2013, Commission meeting. Please save the date.

By common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

5. DCFS Director's report for March 18, 2013 by Philip Browning, Director, DCFS. (13-1243)

Director Browning reported the following:

- Selected staff members participating on the Strategic Plan Objective Teams have been sent to the Lean Six Sigma training which is designed for people who will perform or facilitate an analysis of processes and improvement activities.

- After evaluating the curriculum offered by the Schools of Social Work, it has been determined that the trainings provided by the universities that contract with DCFS need to be redesigned, more specifically in the area of Emergency Response. Additionally, the hope is to incorporate training for DCFS supervisors and career mapping for DCFS staff. The contracts with the universities expire on June 30, 2013.
- On March 1, 2013, the California Departments of Social Services (CDSS) and Health Care Services (CDHCS) released the Core Practice Model Guidebook and Medi-Cal Documentation Manual. The manual describes the billing process of mental health services and activities that are billable. Currently both are being reviewed by affected stakeholders.
- The sex trafficking issues continue to be an interest on the Federal and State level.
- DCFS continues to work with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) on gaining access to school records. Currently, there are approximately 3,000 workers that now have access to academic records for children in the LAUSD system under DCFS supervision.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Director Browning responded with the following:

- DCFS is looking towards changing the existing new social worker academy program that consists mainly of classroom training for a 52-week program. The majority of the training involves working in one of the regional offices. The Schools of Social Work have agreed to incorporate a “teaching hospital” concept as part of the training and “house practitioners” in regional offices to be available to new social workers undergoing the training program. This agreement is pending finalization.
- The Medi-Cal Documentation Manual allows the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to bill for more services than in the past.
- In regards to conducting a review of the Katie A. evaluations by DMH, the exit conditions of Katie A. include a Quality Service Review (QSR) that involves DMH, DCFS and Katie A. Panel members evaluating a selected number of cases and interviewing all persons involved in the case over a two-day period to measure improvement and outcomes.

As part of the DCFS's reorganization, a goal is to incorporate a process that reviews more cases than the QSR process. Additionally, as a result of the reorganization, Jonathan Byers who was a DCFS Regional Administrator for many years has been assigned to handling the Katie A. function.

After discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

6. Renewal of Independent Contractor's Nutrition Services Contract for the Challenger Memorial Youth Center.

- Carol O. Biondi, Commissioner
- Adelina Sorkin, Commissioner (13-1341)

Commissioner Sorkin provided a brief history of the Commission Wellness Committee's involvement with nutrition for detained Probation youth and reported the following:

- In response to the recommendation to renew the food provider contract of Morrison Management Specialists, Inc., (Item No. 37 of 3/12/13) that was continued at the Board of Supervisor's (Board's) meetings held February 26, and March 12, 2013, Commissioner Biondi, along with Commissioner Sorkin and Sylvia Drew Ivie, Commission Liaison, conducted a visit at Challenger Probation Camp (Challenger) on March 7, 2013. Some of the findings during this visit, included feedback from some staff and youth on the poor quality of food being served. Comments from the youth included that they had lost weight since arriving at Challenger.

The camp Director indicated that food evaluation surveys are no longer conducted with the youth because the results are expected to be negative.

- A positive observation was that Challenger's education programs were exceptional. The curriculum included a culinary class and art classes that the boys seemed to enjoy as well as the Advance Path Program for high school credit recovery.
- A representative from Morrison Management Specialists, Inc. explained that the food provided is determined by a preapproved menu. Additionally, it was learned that leftover food is not wasted as it is given to nearby pig farms.

- As a result of the visit, the following is recommended:
 - 1) The Board order an independent review of the food served at Challenger, and that review include interviewing the youth.
 - 2) Attention should be given immediately to ways to make vegetable dishes more palatable for the youth.
 - 3) The food provider contract should not be approved for renewal by the Board until the status of the food quality is known, and the weight loss concern is addressed.

Commissioner Biondi reported the following:

- Concerns with renewing the food provider contract were communicated to four of the Board Offices, including the Second, Third and Fourth Supervisorial Offices as well as Chief Probation Officer, Jerry Powers. Nick Ippolito, Fourth Supervisorial District's Children's Deputy, visited the camp as well. Additionally, the contract was selected by the Probation Department because it provided the lowest cost.
- The National School Lunch Program defines the quantities of food served to youth based on grade level. This is an issue since there may be youth that are in a grade level that does not correspond with their age.
- Although food is prepared onsite, during the visit there appeared to be no evidence of food being cooked other than in the culinary class.
- An idea brought forth by the Commission was that the youth be involved in preparing their meals. The Commission agreed youth participation in preparing meals provide several benefits including, vocational training for the youth, sense of accomplishment, and cost savings.
- Another issue noted was Camp Challenger's remote location which makes it difficult for most families to visit. Sylvia Drew Ivie, Commission Liaison, had a suggestion that the web-based Skype application be used to allow video chatting over the Internet as a means for the youth to communicate with their family members. In addition, Probation field offices have the capability for Skype enabling families that do not have computers or internet in their home to visit a field office to Skype.

After discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

III. PRESENTATION

Agenda Item 7 was taken after Agenda Item 8.

7. Presentation by Kidsave on Adoptions:

- Randi Thompson, CEO/Executive Director
- Lauren Reicher Gordon, Vice President/Director Family Visit Programs (12-5058)

Ms. Thompson distributed presentation material on Kidsave's organization and its Weekend Miracles Program (Program) and presented the following:

- Kidsave has been working with the County for approximately six years with 150 older kids under DCFS supervision. The Program is based on a Family Visit Model developed by Kidsave. The model is built on the premise that once people meet older kids who otherwise would have little chance of finding permanency with a family, the family feels compelled to help this youth. The model includes family visits, advocacy, mentoring and family support.
- The Program is a partnership between DCFS and Kidsave. The Program finds permanent families for older children, ages 9 – 17, in the County foster care system through weekend visits with host families, advocacy and outreach. The youth must be open to adoption, guardianship, or to making a connection as well as mentally and physically ready to participate in the Program.
- DCFS is responsible for identifying and referring kids to the Program as well as assessing and approving families to become a host. Hosting is a one-year commitment, and families must spend a minimum of two weekends a month with the child. Families participating in the Program are not required to undergo a full home study by DCFS; however, they are required to undergo a Live Scan. Kidsave's role is recruiting and engaging families while providing a friendly support system throughout the process as well as advocacy and matching youth with families.
- Some of the families in the Program adopt the child or become a guardian while others stay connected with the youth when they are exiting the Children's Welfare System.

- Kidsave holds monthly advocacy events to provide opportunities for families and youth to meet and interact with each other. These events may include activities such as cooking, bowling and park recreation. Some of the families that attend the events are prospective adoptive parents or are interested in hosting. Children and families who attend the events often become more open to different types of families or children than they initially may have been interested in. The first time a child attends one of the events, they are accompanied by a DCFS Social Worker. Once the child is officially referred to the Program, an approved Kidsave volunteer may drive them to the events. Host families are responsible for providing transportation to the youth they are hosting.
- The next Kidsave event is scheduled for April 20, 2013 at Montrose Bowl from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- By the end of 2012, Kidsave had 150 children referred to the Program. There were 37 children that exited or were put on hold for the Program either because their case plan changed or they were no longer a candidate for the Program. Of the youth that remained in the Program, 53% have achieved or are in the process of legal permanency, 29% are currently connected or have exited care with a host family or are living with a non-related extended family member. A total of 82% of youth in the Program have made some kind of connection.
- Research conducted on Kidsave and similar programs show an impact on cost savings with an immediate impact to the Child Welfare System and a long-term impact to State and Federal government as well as society. However, funding has not been available for an evidence-based study and the cost savings is assumed based on the research.
- Some challenges that Kidsave is faced with in expanding the Program include inadequate staffing resources for Kidsave and DCFS and funding sources.

Ms. Reicher Gordon added that 75% of funding comes from foundations and private donors. To address short-term funding needs, a proposal is being made to DCFS for additional funding and staffing for the DCFS Placement and Recruitment Unit. For mid-term funding needs, Kidsave is reaching out to DCFS in hopes that the Department identifies funds in their budget that would help compensate the expiration of the Department of Health and Human Services Diligent Recruitment Grant in 2015. This Grant accounts for 25% of the Program's funding. Kidsave is looking for ideas and partnerships that will provide Program sustainability. The current budget for the Program is approximately \$378,000.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Ms. Thompson responded with the following:

- The reason that children have exited the Program is that they are no longer an appropriate fit for the Program mainly due to medical or mental health needs that may interfere with the Program or that the child is not ready to be involved in the kind of relationship building the Program is based on.
- Kidsave does not remove children from the Program. DCFS provides intervention for children that have either opted out of the Program or are no longer deemed appropriate for the Program. Kidsave continues working with DCFS to ensure that decisions made regarding a child's participation in the Program are best for the child.

Suri Grant, Recruitment Administrator, Placement and Recruitment Unit (PRU), DCFS, explained that the decision for children to be in the Program ultimately lies with DCFS. Promises to be adopted are never made to the child. Youth referred to PRU are evaluated for the Program.

- The average amount of time a family stays connected with the youth is one year and 7 months; however, there are many instances in which families continue to host the child for three or more years.
- Ms. Reicher Gordon explained the difference between a mentorship program and Kidsave's Program is that children hosted by a family become part of a family and are exposed to family role models.

After discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

Attachments: [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

IV. WORKGROUP UPDATE

8. Commission for Children and Families Mental Health Workgroup update on Transitional Housing:

- Patricia Curry, Commissioner (13-0999)

Commissioner Curry distributed a document with vacancy rates for Step Out, Hillview and Athena Transitional Housing Programs (Fiscal year 2011 – 2012) and reported the following:

- **Over the past three years, the Self-sufficiency Sub Committee Workgroup and Mental Health Workgroup have held meetings separately discussing the issues surrounding the high vacancy rates at Step Out, Hillview, and Athena Transitional Housing Programs (THPs). Both the Self-sufficiency Sub Committee Workgroup and Mental Health Workgroup have completed the ground work within their scope, and the next steps would be for the Commission to take a position on this issue.**
- **The THPs at the three homes began approximately 13 years ago. The THPs were designed specifically to provide housing to youth who are exiting DCFS or Probation systems. The intended funding sources for the THPs were from the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT), Chaffey, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) funding. Over the years, the THPs have evolved and now receive funding from different sources including Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI). Athena and Step Out receive Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding which limits the eligibility of youth for the Program due to HUD requirements. HUD criterion requires that the youth be homeless in order to be eligible for the housing programs. Therefore, youth exiting either system must first experience homelessness prior to entering Athena or Step Out housing programs.**
- **A meeting was held with the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) Director, Marvin Southard and Robin Kay, Chief Deputy Director, on the issues of youth's eligibility for THPs. Since this meeting, DMH assisted in reviving the Mental Health Screening Committee comprised of DMH, DCFS and Probation staff who screen youth exiting both systems that are appropriate for the three THPs. The screening process requires effort from the departments involved. There has been some improvement in the vacancy rates; however, vacancy rates continue to be a struggle with Hillview and Step Out.**

- A set of recommendations were communicated to DCFS, DMH and Probation participants at a recent Self-Sufficiency meeting. However, DMH has taken the position that the lead responsibility of the THPs for the three homes is with DCFS despite the facilities being contracted through DMH, and the eligibility for the Program requiring that the youth be emancipated. DMH indicated their involvement is a supportive role. The question of responsibility continues to be a challenge. Additionally, DCFS recommended that the three THPs are incorporated into DMH's continuum of care being developed with their emergency shelters and permanent and affordable housing.

Chair Berger added that a recommendation should be presented to the full Commission at a future meeting.

After discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

Attachments: [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

V. MISCELLANEOUS

Matters Not Posted

9. Matters not posted on the agenda, to be discussed and (if requested) placed on the agenda for action at a future meeting of the Commission, or matters requiring immediate action because of an emergency situation or where the need to take action arose subsequent to the posting of the agenda. (13-1244)

There were none.

Announcements

10. Announcements for the meeting of March 18, 2013. (13-1245)

There were none.

Public Comment

11. Opportunity for members of the public to address the Commission on items of interest that are within the jurisdiction of the Commission. (13-1246)

No members of the public addressed the Commission.

Adjournment

12. Adjournment of the meeting of March 18, 2013. (13-1247)

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.